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INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE
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UNCLAS GEORGETOWN 000706

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E.O. 12598: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S SELF-HELP FUND SUPPORTS GUYANESE EYE CARE

REFS: A) GEORGETOWN 130, B) GEORGETOWN 643

¶1. (U) On Monday, July 10, Ambassador awarded four grantees through the Ambassador's Self Help Program, including a US\$6,500 grant to the "New Light, New Sight" program at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Georgetown. Mercy Hospital's program will provide subsidized eye surgery to persons living outside Georgetown, primarily in the hinterland regions. The project will focus on economically disadvantaged individuals suffering from low vision or blindness due to cataract or other treatable eye problems, and the surgery will take place at the hospital with a local ophthalmologist at a discounted price. The hospital aims to treat fifty patients in its first year, and Post's contribution will fund basic eye instruments to supplement the estimated US\$91,000 in goods and services that the hospital has devoted to the program.

¶2. (SBU) In making the award determination, Post noted in particular the sustainable nature of St. Joseph's program, which is being performed on a subsidized cost-reimbursable basis, as well as the fact that the surgeries will employ local eye doctors. Post notes that Cuba has received substantial public attention in Guyana for its "Miracle Mission" eye surgery program (Refs). While Mercy Hospital's program is laudable on its own merits, Post is hopeful that highlighting the hospital's efforts through the Ambassador's Self-Help Fund will also temper the Cubans' public diplomacy efforts while at the same time developing Guyana's ongoing capacity to provide quality eye care for its citizens in country.

THOMAS